

## Arlington, IN Plane Crash Kills USAC Personnel, Apr 1978

Submitted by Stu Beitler

### 7 OF 9 DEAD IN PLANE CRASH USAC OFFICIALS.

Arlington, Ind. (AP) -- Authorities today began sifting through the debris of a twin-engine plane that crashed and exploded in flames 25 miles southeast of Indianapolis, killing nine persons including seven top U. S. Auto Club officials and a member of USAC's medical staff. USAC confirmed the victims included FRANK DELROY, longtime chairman of the USAC technical committee, and RAY MARQUETTE, USAC vice president in charge of public affairs.

The other victims were identified as:

SHIM MALONE, head of USAC's midget car division and chief starter at many races throughout the country.

STAN WORLEY, USAC registrar.

DON PEABODY, head of the USAC sprint car division.

JUDY PHILLIPS, artist and typist who helped direct the publication of USAC's newsletter.

RUSS TEEGARDEN, assistant USAC technical chairman.

DR. BRUCE WHITE, a member of USAC's medical staff.

DON MULLENDORE, pilot of the plane.

Rush County Coroner JOHN TODD said the bodies of the victims would be taken to his funeral home in Rushville, the county seat. The USAC officials were returning to Indianapolis from Sunday's race at Trenton, N. J.

The aircraft went down in a 30-acre cornfield after passing near the farmhouse of GENE GARDNER, about one-half mile east of the crash site.

The plane crashed Sunday night, shortly before 10 p.m. EST.

"I knew the plane was in trouble," said GARDNER, a World War II Air Force veteran. "The engines were wide open like it was in a power drive."

"It was really screaming. There was a large thud and then a boom," he added. "When we looked out, there was fireball."

GARDNER said he called the Rush County sheriffs office, then he and his 19-year-old son, J.

B., rushed to the scene, where the plane's impact left a crater 5-8 feet deep and at least 10 feet in diameter.

"I've never seen a mess as bad," GARDNER said. "Everything is just in pieces. When we saw there was no chance of anyone surviving, we got out of there."

Marshall RANDY CHANDLER from the nearby community of Carthage was the first official to arrive at the scene. He said there were no bodies intact.

Recovery efforts were hampered by muddiness in the freshly plowed field. Vehicles, including those with four-wheel drive, were not able to get nearer the site than one-quarter mile.

WILLIS ZIESE, a Federal Aviation Administration official at Indianapolis, said there were a number of FAA investigators at the scene and a National Transportation Safety Board representative from Chicago en route.

A USAC spokesman at headquarters in Indianapolis confirmed early today that a personal credit card found in the wreckage had led to the tentative identification of the passengers as USAC officials.

The identification numbers on the plane were destroyed in the fire. State officials said it would be impossible to make positive identification until later today.

State Police Sgt. CLAUDE TRENT said the Rush County Sheriff's Department had cordoned off the field until Federal Aviation Administration investigators arrived.

"We'll be attempting to find a log book or some identifying marks," TRENT said.

Although severe thunderstorm and tornado warnings were posted for several parts of the state, it was calm around Arlington when the plane crashed, officials said.

The plane was traveling from Johnstown, Pa., to Indianapolis. The USAC official said the plane had stopped over in Johnstown on its way back from a race in Trenton, N. J.

USAC sanctions a variety of types of auto racing from stock cars to the 200-mph class which runs in the Indy 500.

USAC president DICK KING, who normally would have been on the flight, remained in the Trenton area overnight for business reasons.

Kokomo Tribune Indiana 1978-04-24

